

Wasn't a construction lift ticketed downtown recently?

While the city and its parking contractor (ABM) are not aware of this particular instance, ABM has issued tickets to pieces of equipment if they are not in compliance, and are interfering with on- or off-street operations. In some cases, ABM is responding to a complaint from a downtown stakeholder negatively impacted by the location or placement of the equipment.

Have you ever considered getting rid of the city tax to make business ownership more affordable in the city?

The city's income tax can be a concern to businesses. However, it makes up approximately 33 percent of the city's budget, or about \$16 million. For the city to make up that amount of revenue, we would need to eliminate the majority of police and fire services, and/or parks and recreation, and some street programs. We would no longer be able to provide the level of service we do now, and that would also have a negative impact on businesses.

What are we doing to bring the Cereal City culture back to Battle Creek? Kellogg's used to offer tours. Could we reopen that and put classic figures through downtown to selfie and #DowntownBC with?

A scavenger hunt for character sculptures downtown sounds like a fun idea. But for right now, you can get your photo with Tony the Tiger at the Welcome Center in downtown Battle Creek.

Home of the Calhoun County Visitors Bureau, the Welcome Center has a gift shop with all the essential Kellogg's memorabilia. Next door is the Cereal History Exhibit. Visitors can learn about the beginning of the cereal industry in Battle Creek – both Kellogg's and Post – along with some fun artifacts. One of the featured exhibits is glass bottles full of preserved cereal.

The Welcome Center is located at 34 W. Jackson St., Suite 1A. Look for the suite with paintings of giant cereal mascots in the window.



Employ the homeless with all the planning to revamp BC.

Homelessness is an important issue in our community. The city works closely with a coalition of service providers to address homeless concerns. Much of that work focuses on preparing individuals to be successful in the job market, a key to helping the homeless achieve economic self-sufficiency. There are many good job programs -- such as the Edge program at Goodwill Industries -- in the community. When

using U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant dollars, the city is also obligated to give preference to contractors that hire low-income workers in the neighborhoods where the money is spent. These programs and tools can help give the homeless an opportunity to participate in the city's growth and development.

Any plans on having the Taste of Battle Creek downtown like they did in the past?

The format for Backyard Burgers and Brewsfest, one of our annual signature festivals downtown, expanded this year to include vendors providing food beyond just burgers. The event was a big success as a result, and there has been additional discussion about how to continue growing the food offerings. Such an approach would duplicate the formula used for the Taste of Battle Creek. The Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce organizes this event. We will be sure to pass along this feedback to their team.

Why did the pay boxes go away downtown for parking? And can we please have some payphones around?

-At this time, the Honor Boxes are an obsolete system, and are no longer supported. We are currently looking to implement newer technology in our parking system, which would offer the opportunity to pay for daily parking in the lots by mobile app, beyond the current two hours.

-There are very few pay phones left in Battle Creek. One is at the Toeller Building, the Calhoun County building on East Michigan Avenue. Because a majority of people have cell phones (96 percent, according to a recent Pew Research study, discussed in a recent Battle Creek Enquirer article), many places are replacing pay phones with charging stations. Bronson Battle Creek Hospital has a phone charging station in the Emergency Department, as well as a courtesy phone in Emergency, and in the main lobby. Most locations have phased out pay phones over many years now.

Will Horrocks stay where they are?

It remains to be seen if Horrocks will stay at their downtown location. They have explored options at the mall, but right now, no deal to move the store is in the works, as there are significant barriers to a mall location. We will continue to work with Horrocks' ownership to support their downtown presence, while improving the overall downtown business environment. Ultimately, we recognize that the owners will do what they feel is best for their business.

One of the things that frustrates me is seeing an out-of-town company doing work here – tree trimming, electrical work, construction, concrete work, even school pictures. Why does this continue to happen and what do you plan to do in the future to make sure work here is done by local business owners?

What efforts are being led to ensure construction dollars of economic development projects are pushed toward local Battle Creek contractors, to keep those dollars in our community?

What percentage of construction dollars on a project are wages that could create economic development dollars to stay in our local economy?

The City of Battle Creek does not have a local preference ordinance, but we do encourage supporting local businesses on a regular basis, and in our purchasing documents. A recent amendment to the state constitution limits, and in some cases prohibits, local municipalities from passing local preference ordinances.

Where funding source, covenants, and law necessitate, the city follows prevailing wage requirements. City incomes taxes collected are dollars that stay in our local economy for a variety of municipal services, including those that support economic development.

Are there any plans for someone to buy Tree House Foods?

Post Consumer Brands has acquired a segment of Tree House Foods, including the facility in Battle Creek. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission is still reviewing that purchase, so the next steps are unknown until that review is complete.

We need a civic theater/movie theater – these would be a reason for people to spend time downtown. A year-round market would also be nice. Marshall has one – why don't we? South side could use a farmers market. We could also use a "good" sit-down BBQ restaurant.

-It would be great to have an active theater group and movie theater venue downtown. Both have different needs and receive support from different demographics. Movie theaters in general are struggling across the country. The theaters we currently have are working very hard to attract moviegoers. The demand for a downtown theater doesn't exist today. However, there is a possibility of attracting a boutique movie theater at some point in the future, as downtown residential units are developed at high enough density to support a captive downtown audience.

Currently, the What A Do Theater is renovating a space at 200 W. Michigan Ave., and has an office at 2 W. Michigan Ave., Suite 304. Contact information is:

What A Do Theater Co.
90 McCamly St. – PO Box 2503
Battle Creek, MI 49015

Teri Noaeill, Executive Director/Youth Programming – whatadoexecutivedirector@gmail.com
Lynda Hensel, Financial Manager/Ticket Reservations – whatadooffice@gmail.com

-An independent market association operates the farmers market in downtown Battle Creek. The association currently does not see enough demand for a year-round market, but continues to explore indoor venues and year-round feasibility. Their short-term focus is on growing their current offerings downtown, with an eye toward the future with expanded, and perhaps year-round, programming.

As for the south side, again, the association does not currently see enough demand for a south-side location. There are great facilities downtown to support the market, and their focus is to grow at the current location (Festival Market Square).

-The city's Small Business Development team is currently working with a prospect interested in establishing a BBQ restaurant downtown. It is early in the development process, but we certainly hope this project will come to fruition.

Make the mall a cannabis area.

The mall area is zoned appropriately for medical/recreational marijuana provisioning/retail centers. The city currently has an active application for a medical marijuana facility at the former Don Pablos site. With the required 1,000-foot buffer between facilities, only a small portion of the remaining property (a portion of the former Sears building) is available for medical/recreational marijuana uses.

With the rezoning of Old Lakeview, are district lines being revamped to account for school closures? And with that, are parks in housing areas currently in BC wards going to gain attention for rehab? McCrea has basketball and tennis courts that are currently unusable. Kids literally play ball in the streets on bus routes. What can we do to change this culture?

-The city is working on a new zoning map for the entire city. Most areas will be the same, or similar to what they are zoned now. Most of the changes will be to commercial corridors, and the changes will allow more flexibility for allowable building uses. Most elementary schools were constructed as neighborhood schools, and located in the middle of single-family residential neighborhoods zoned for those single-family homes.

At this time, it is likely that the closed schools will remain in a single-family residential zoning district. While it is unlikely that someone would purchase these buildings for a home, their large size can accommodate myriad uses – multi-family housing, live/work space, artist co-op, retail, coffee shop, baker, light manufacturing, etc. Every school is situated differently, so it is important to have the ability to review a proposal to evaluate neighborhood context, noise, parking, traffic, etc. to make sure that the use would be harmonious with surrounding properties. This also gives the neighborhood the opportunity to weigh in on a proposed use.

-The city budgets a certain amount per year to handle park maintenance. Larger park projects are included in the city's annual Capital Improvement Plan. Calhoun County is considering a ballot proposal for a countywide parks millage that would create funding for park development and maintenance. Such a millage would allow the city to do much more park maintenance on an annual basis. Regardless of the millage outcome, the city will continue to address as many park maintenance issues as possible, with current budget constraints.

Any plans for support of our cultural institutions? Many orgs focus on art, history, museums, music, etc. could use more attention.

The Calhoun County Visitors Bureau includes culture institutions in its promotions, which can be handy for visitors and locals alike. For instance, next year's visitors guide will include an itinerary for art lovers, a spotlight on Leila Arboretum, and places to learn local history.

Visit www.battlecreekvisitors.org for the event calendar, and click on "what's new" to find articles highlighting different cultural institutions. There are articles about a weekend of art events, or touring Color the Creek murals.

Tune in to Tim Collins on WBCN on the first and third Thursday of the month at 7:45 a.m. to hear more from the CVB – they will promote museum events, symphony concerts, art exhibits, and more.

What is the plan for the site of Graphic Packaging?

Will GPI have to do any environmental tests before they leave town, and what is the plan for that area and the old Kmart?

Graphic Packaging's recent announcement to invest \$600 million into their Kalamazoo facility was announced as a capacity-neutral investment. This project will take multiple years to complete, just to get the new capacity-neutral machine online. GPI has multiple facilities throughout the Midwest, where current capacities could come offline, including at the Battle Creek facility. GPI's capacity could remain the same two or three years from now, or capacity demands could increase, eliminating or reducing the need to change current production. In any event, if GPI were to close the Battle Creek facility, it most certainly would have to abide by all regulatory and environmental laws. Currently, both the Kmart and GPI sites are held by private entities and, ideally, the community would work with these parties to redevelop the area into one of several possibilities, including the re-naturalization of the Kalamazoo River.

What's the latest with the historic Binder Building (34 E. Michigan Ave.)?

Unfortunately, the building continues to deteriorate. It is not secured from the weather, and remains an area of concern. The city is working with design and engineering professionals to determine the options available to address the situation. Once we have a firm cost of those options, city regulatory and enforcement staff will make a recommendation to leadership on how best to move forward.

Were the bees in the brick house on Riverside ever saved or preserved?

A private developer is renovating the property on Riverside. We do not have information on how the bees were handled.

Can we walk up to the top of the parking garage on West Michigan again to take photos?

While individuals are not prohibited from taking pictures from the parking structure, for safety reasons, we do not encourage activities other than parking in the ramps.

Can we ever have a Shranks again, and what is going on with that building? I thought I heard there were plumbing issues. What is the city doing with that building? And that Froggy's Depot on NE Capital? And that blue place on Calhoun?

-The Shranks building was demolished in the summer of 2019. The building was unstable and unsafe for occupancy, as it had a separating exterior wall. Battle Creek Unlimited has been working to market the site for new residential construction.

-Both of the properties on Capital Avenue NE and Calhoun Street are privately owned and available for lease and/or sale. The city's Small Business Development team has referred several potential businesses to the owners over time. We will continue to look for viable occupants to aid in the redevelopment of these properties.

How can citizens voice their opinions for the master plan? (In reference to the zoning ordinance staff currently are re-writing.)

The city has released zoning ordinance and map (ZOMA) project information on social media, the radio, newspaper, and TV news to keep everyone in the community aware of the status of the project. There will be meetings scheduled in early 2020 to review the draft ordinance and map. Dates and locations will be announced. In the meantime, staff is always available to discuss concerns, issues, and community needs – 269-966-3320 or publicinput@battlecreekmi.gov.

The city's master plan already identified these district areas for development. Why are we remapping them again? (In reference to sub-area plans.)

The city's master plan prescribes a future vision for land use patterns in the community. The zoning ordinances prescribe the regulatory requirements governing the proposed land use. The city's Small Business Development team is mapping the various commercial districts in the city, so we can identify where current districts are physically located, which businesses exist there, and what might be missing. By doing so, we can identify which services are needed in a commercial district to support local neighbors. We can then ensure offerings align with our vision for future land use in the district, and meet regulatory compliance.

I'd like to see the liquor store that's next door to the daycare on Michigan Avenue be addressed. Liquor is OK, but we don't allow cannabis within 1,000 feet?

Businesses association with selling marijuana (medical or adult use/recreational) must be 1,000 feet from a school or library, which is state law. They are not restricted from locating near a daycare. The

state law concerning liquor licenses maintains setbacks from certain uses, like churches, but there is no local ordinance. If there are activities that seem to be a nuisance, or affect the daycare, please contact the city so we can follow up on those concerns – publicinput@battlecreekmi.gov.

What tourist attractions do we offer?

It is impossible to list all of the attractions in this space, so we suggest visiting www.battlecreekvisitors.org, or stopping by the Welcome Center at 34 W. Jackson St., Suite 1A, for a visitors guide. The Welcome Center is also a great place to pick up Battle Creek souvenirs, like a Cereal City candle (it smells like Froot Loops and Fruity Pebbles) or postcards.

- Family fun highlights include Binder Park Zoo and Full Blast.
- We see many people interested in our local history, and they can visit the Sojourner Truth monument, the Underground Railroad monument, and Historic Adventist Village. There is also a history-based walking tour map available at the Welcome Center.
- Leila Arboretum has Kingman Museum and the Fantasy Forest, which is a fun and kind-of odd roadside attraction.
- The two main rivers are a great resource, especially with the current popularity of kayaking. On summer weekends, you can see a parade of paddlers go by Historic Bridge Park.
- Events that attract many visitors include the Field of Flight Air Show and Balloon Festival, Cereal Festival, and Leilapalooza.
- The Calhoun County Visitors Bureau recently released a report about the economic impact of sports tourism. Not everyone may think of Bailey Park and Kellogg Arena as tourist attractions, but Battle Creek sees an influx of visitors because they are here, and those visitors are spending their money on food, gas, and lodging.

If you are interested in local tourism, we recommend you sign up to be a Certified Tourism Ambassador. It requires taking a half-day class that teaches the history of the Calhoun County, and fun facts, along with places to eat and things to do. To learn more or sign up for the next training session, email info@battlecreekvisitors.org or visit www.CTANetwork.com.

The Battle Creek area has one incubator kitchen on Dickman Road (Sprout Market, old Springfield market). How will the Tiger Room collaborate with Sprout's kitchen? Will the Tiger Room provide more options/more accessories than Sprout kitchen?

The Tiger Room is designed to provide an opportunity for companies that have moved beyond the incubation stage. As such, Sprout Market Incubator and the Tiger Room Accelerator will complement each other. The Tiger Room will be another asset for our food-rich town. Early in the grant process, it was required that there be a demonstrated need. Multiple early-stage companies throughout the region have indicated a need for this acceleration space.

There is a funding gap for old building owners. Can the city relax elevator or sprinkler standards, OR create a large pot of money for residential and commercial buildings for rehab or mothballing?

The city typically adopts and enforces code established at either the state (State Building Code) or federal (International Property Maintenance Code) level. While it is not likely that the code authors will relax regulations around access and fire suppression, through the newly established Real Estate Improvement Fund, we now have money to address downtown projects. The fund is specifically designed to address rehab costs and can help fill development gaps. Battle Creek Unlimited administers the fund, and you can find more information here: <https://bcunlimited.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final-BCU-Real-Estate-Improvement-Fund-Program-Guidelines-6.27.19.pdf>

There seems to be a gap in funding help for BC citizens with old properties. How do average people access resources to restore older properties?

There are resources available to assist neighbors with property redevelopment. Certain tax abatements, the Real Estate Improvement Fund (referenced above), business incentives through the city's Small Business Development team, loans for small businesses from lenders like Northern Initiatives, and more. We encourage anyone looking to redevelop or rehab a commercial property in the city to contact the SBD team for assistance. They can help determine which, if any, available incentives might apply -- <https://www.battlecreekmi.gov/703/Small-Business-Development>.

The north side of town is a food desert. With all of the apartments coming downtown, is there a plan to have a quality grocery store on the north side?

The city is looking at a number of strategies to address the lack food access in certain areas of the community. We have identified various commercial districts on the Northside, and are working to identify the amenities needed to make the surrounding neighborhoods desirable places to live, work, and play. That strategy includes adding the amenities needed to give neighbors access to all of the services they need within a reasonable walking distance.

As residential units add critical mass to the downtown, we are confident that we can recruit businesses, like grocery stores, to the nearby Northside neighborhoods to meet neighbors' needs. (Also, do not forget about Horrocks.)

Economic development has required foundation stones for its success. One of those stones is quality education in the entire community. Battle Creek has four school districts fighting each other (school of choice) for a declining student population. Why? Surely we can do better as one than as four. When will government acknowledge the need to do a better job of educational management and structure in our financially challenging environment?

Answer pending – stay tuned.

The Krazy for the Kazoo river cleanup on Oct. 5 was cancelled. How can the city engage citizens with the environment? Will a “new Lizzy” be hired? Do we have a tree planting initiative?

We were disappointed to cancel Krazy for the Kazoo; it is a wonderful event that supports our river. Once we have a new environmental program coordination (Lizzy – Elizabeth Paul – most recently held this position), we hope to explore our options to engage the community around the environment. In 2019 the City Commission approved the city’s Sustainability Plan -- <http://www.battlecreekmi.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5685/City-of-Battle-Creek-Environmental-Sustainability-Plan---February-2019?bidId=>. The Sustainable BC Committee is working with staff to help implement this plan. The committee meetings are open to the public, and we encourage anyone to join their conversations. You can find their meeting information on the city’s website. The city also has a Tree Advisory Board that guides our tree efforts. Recently, we have removed more trees – based on disease and damage – than we have replaced, and this is an area we are reviewing, and on which we want to improve. The Tree Advisory Board information also is on the city’s website. Visit <http://www.battlecreekmi.gov/346/Boards-Committees-Councils> for information on both of these groups.

How do we get Kellogg College to move some of its classes downtown? Has it been attempted? WMU is in downtown.

The city has an excellent relationship with KCC, and that is a topic we can discuss and explore with them. Keep in mind their current location already is in close proximity to downtown.

Has the city considered making/installing the “snow melt system” (heated streets and sidewalks) for the downtown streets and sidewalks to accommodate the seniors, visually impaired, foreigners, folks from hot climates, etc.? Like Kalamazoo and Holland have, and are expanding currently.

The city has not considered a snowmelt system in at least the last five years. We understand that our colleagues in Kalamazoo and Holland have these systems, but they tell us these systems can be costly to install and maintain. At this time, our resources in Battle Creek do not support that. However, we could explore it later, if there is continued interest.

What part do commissioners play in the “mosqui-no” spraying?

City Commissioners did not have a role in the EEE mosquito spraying. That was carried out by the State of Michigan, with information passed to us through the Calhoun County Public Health Department. The state did not receive enough individual opt-out requests from neighbors in Calhoun County to halt spraying here. The state has said that spraying is now complete in all of the identified areas of need.

Why haven't there been more giant developments in Battle Creek? Why are no large skyscrapers being built? They could build skyscrapers downtown, on Beckley Road, by the airport. And more malls in these areas. Much more fun and recreational activities are necessary. Crosswalk, stoplight, and sidewalk work on Capital SW and Beckley are needed.

-Skyscrapers can be a useful development in urban core areas. Currently, developers have not approached us with interest in high-rise developments. Many consider Battle Creek a small town, at 51,500 people, and high-rise developers often are looking for more density of people. Skyscrapers near the W.K. Kellogg Airport would be prohibited, per Federal Aviation Administration regulations; only the air traffic control tower is allowed in this area.

-With the change in trends of how consumers buy goods, the traditional mall designs are becoming obsolete. Walkable spaces and easy access in and out for retail options certainly are things we are looking into.

-The city is always analyzing our sidewalks and non-motorized options. We will continue to add sidewalks as funding allows, with high priorities around schools, neighborhoods, and other gathering places.

-Recreational opportunities are a great offering in any vibrant community. Battle Creek is fortunate to have many beautiful parks (both for humans and dogs), the Linear Park and other trails, Full Blast Recreation Center, softball and baseball fields, and two beautiful rivers. In addition, we are excited for Battle Rock (climbing walls and adventure sports) construction to begin downtown, and to find more ways to access our rivers for recreational purposes.

What are we doing to reach out to the African-American and Potawatomi communities with regard to the river plans? There is a large amount of history to tell regarding that location.

If the channelization of the river is reversed, and that area is turned back to natural flow, how can we restore good faith and have reparations for black and poor people who were originally displaced?

We are doing our best to engage all stakeholders around that, and there are still many conversations we must have. We have to remember that the concrete channels were put in for a reason – so the downtown won't flood. The Army Corps of Engineers is now telling us that the channels are nearing the end of their life – so what do we do? We have learned there is a potential that widening the river would help. If we do that, there is a possibility we could shift Dickman Road, which travels along the river. These are the conversations we are having.

We do need to make sure we understand the expectations of the Battle Creek neighbors impacted in Battle Creek, and understand the history. There is a lot of history there that not all of us have experienced. We are taking the time to understand the history of The Bottoms, and we appreciate the awareness these questions raise about engagement with our community. We do not have the full answer today, but this project will emphasize engagement, and these are important conversations that we will have.

If we are able to remove the concrete channels, and connect neighbors to the river and the downtown, we can create a positive impact going forward.

Why is the city more concerned about downtown than any other part of the city?

What we have learned by studying other cities is that they have started by revitalizing their urban core – the downtown, the hub where businesses have flourished. We moved away from that, and now we are coming back to it. We know we can't stop there. We have to connect the neighborhoods to downtown – that's where our sub-area plans come in. It's not that we are not paying attention to the rest of the city – there is a lot going on in many locations – but we know we have to start with the core development. We need all components – more events, and housing options, for example – to move forward on that, and be successful in economic development.

I would like to see small areas in Verona, Lakeview, and Urbandale used. There are so many vacant buildings. Also the McCamly Plaza. That would be awesome to have amenities there again... we need a roller skating rink, in my opinion. Old Kmart would be a sweet skating rink.

-This is what we often refer to as district development. We are going to conduct two studies – on Old Lakeview and Goguac Lake. These are not just throwing ideas out there to see what works, but actually doing the work to change the zoning in these areas, and make changes for new growth so that we can be development ready. We are looking at developing three to five sub-area plans. Some are just a crossroads, some are corridors, and some are as big as Urbandale.

-The McCamly Plaza Hotel continues a conversion to a DoubleTree by Hilton. That conversion includes building out the plaza/atrium area. Most recently, Biggby Coffee has moved into this area.

We hear a lot about Lakeview, but you didn't answer anything about Verona and Urbandale. What are the city's plans for the north side of the city?

We have chosen a couple spots where we can start this planning, that are based on modeling the city's zoning. Those we chose are near centers that have blight and vacant properties. We can model new zoning practices in those areas without getting involved in places that are already constructed. Once we learn which zoning will work best, we can take what we have learned to places like Capital NE, which is headed toward Verona. It will not all look the same. We have to develop the tools in some places, to use them in others in the city.

How can we attract better cuisine, and to have businesses that stay open later? It seems like our town sleeps after 9 p.m.

We've lost a lot of nice restaurants over the years. It would be nice to attract a wider variety of restaurants.

Restaurants open a little longer, after 9 p.m. sometimes. The sidewalks roll up too early downtown.

We have seen some great responses to Battle Creek Unlimited's requests for proposals of various businesses – New Holland Brewing and Handmap Brewing, for example. There are a lot of foodies in our

community, and we need them to be more vocal – we need people in the community to visit the businesses we have. The more we do that, the more the community will grow. With New Holland for example, the industry is watching for a high number of visitors. If they can do that, other businesses will follow.

Downtown is a crown jewel, where everyone can feel welcome, and it is also about critical mass. With more residential units in progress, those neighbors will expect businesses to be open at night. All of that together will ultimately create the vitality people are seeking.

White water rafting? Where?

This was a reference to Battle Creek Whitewater Inc., a local group advocating for the naturalization of the Kalamazoo River downtown. You can find more about this at www.battlecreekwhitewater.org.

I was curious if the city is aware of the quantity of patients leaving the hospitals in town at all hours, who were utterly reliant on City Cab's operation. Can it be done, with relative quickness, to implement a night route to the bus lines to accommodate this need?

Longer busing, maybe 24-7 busing to the Fort and shopping areas?

Can we attract Uber or Lyft in Battle Creek?

-We are learning more now about the City Cab passenger needs. Battle Creek Transit has tried to respond in a very short time frame to the community's transportation needs, with City Cab closing. Unfortunately, business costs forced City Cab to make that decision.

Transit does have a new, premium service (BCGo) to try to help. This service runs from 6 p.m. to midnight on Saturdays, and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Fare is \$15 per passenger, per one-way ride.

Equal access is important to us, and to the Federal Transit Administration. FTA regulations required that services remain equal to all populations throughout all hours of service. This means that providing overnight, or 24-hour service would require us to serve all areas equally, not only specific routes or districts. Without significant additional funding, Battle Creek Transit is unable to meet those requirements. In addition, Transit is required to provide ADA complimentary paratransit during all hours of fixed-route bus service (our Tele-Transit service). This doubles the hourly operating expense from \$125 per vehicle hour to nearly \$250. This means Transit would need more than 250 passengers per hour to sustain the services we offer, something unlikely during overnight hours.

There are other transportation service providers in the market, like Aequitas Mobility Services, all of whom are working to meet the community's transportation needs. Anyone with concerns, or if you're not sure how to meet your transportation needs, call Battle Creek Transit at 269-966-3474. We have received these types of calls from neighbors, and have been able to solve many of them by sharing the various transportation opportunities available in the community.

-Private ride-share services – like Uber and Lyft – also can be part of the solution. Lyft is in Battle Creek, and something neighbors can do to help increase the availability of these services is to use them. Even if

you don't need to take a Lyft to go out for coffee, if you can manage doing it, that will encourage more drivers to provide the service in our community. We are hopeful these companies will take advantage of the opportunity to have a stronger presence here, and plan to do everything we can to reach out and invite them to do so.

With the consistent loss of business to Kalamazoo, what plans are there to recoup new business? What are the future plans for development at the mall, as well as downtown Battle Creek?

-Battle Creek is a food, automotive supply, and aviation defense community. We have lost some industry, but history tells us those industries are declining. The Fort Custer Industrial Park was created to diversify industry, and it is thriving right now, with over 13,500 employees. There is a healthy base. Companies will come and go, but we are always on the lookout for the next industry. Right now, that is Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) or drones.

Automation also is here, and is going to increase. It will mean higher dollar investments, with lower job numbers, and we have to watch for that.

-The mall is a unique challenge, in that we are not dealing with just filling the space, but a seismic shift around retail sales, nationally, regionally, and locally. At Lakeview Square, the anchors are owned separately, and the mall itself has its own manager. They have to come to a common understanding about what their retail strategy will be, and they have to be realistic. We are in constant contact with the mall stakeholders about that strategy, and they are doing well to attract uses we don't typically think of in a mall, like entertainment facilities and office space. They are still in the middle of this process, and the mall will have a viable future, but it will not look the same as the traditional retail we are used to.

We have a tremendous IT infrastructure with the Federal Center. Today we have a cyber mission out in Fort Custer. We have tremendous assets to build from. What are the city's plans for spring-boarding off from either the Federal Center and/or the cyber mission that's out at Fort Custer?

Through Battle Creek Unlimited, we are engaged with The Roosevelt Group, out of Washington, DC, that has helped us position Battle Creek for those new mission sets. We have fiber in the ground that is unheard of for a city our size. Unmanned Aircraft Systems are basically drones, and they not only fly themselves, but also have a lot of data. Battle Creek can support that. We have assets including the airport, the Air National Guard, and the Federal Center, and that is why we are working to attract UAS. It is a slow, expensive process, but that is what we want to attract.

The city also is hearing various local partners say that they want to open up their facilities, and their expertise around cyber activity and other areas – to invite the community in to learn. We just need to partner with them effectively to get to that point.

Questions about the women and minority business development funds – 1) How many people/businesses have applied for funds, and what is their demographic info (women, white women, people of color, etc.); 2) How many have received funds – who and what are their demographics?; 3) How does the application process overcome barriers produced by systemic racism and systemic misogyny? If it does not address these barriers, how is it of benefit to women and people of color?

If everyone is equal, why single out women and people of color, or minorities?

-We have heard in the city that there are gaps to accessing the capital funds to start businesses. We are working to unravel the red tape that government can create. We talk with people in the community and figure out how we can modify processes to meet their needs and break down barriers. We take our application process to them and ask how they would work through it. We have a host of wonderful partners who are learning with us; we know we can't do this alone.

Some of the programs we are taking right to the communities, like the Sisters in Business program. We also are holding business training classes. During one, we had a language barrier with a Burmese neighbor; the next round, we got an interpreter to assist. We are holding our programs in intentional ways, and learning as we go. If we see a barrier we were not aware of, we alter the program so we can address it.

The Battle Creek Unlimited Real Estate Improvement Fund, a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has four requirement pools – affordable housing, jobs for low- to moderate-income neighbors, women- and minority-owned businesses, and historic preservation. We have about a dozen applicants, and a majority are from the women- and minority-owned business pool. We are still in the grant-awarding phase, and will continue tracking that data.

-It is important to recognize equity among all individuals. Unfortunately, not all individuals have always been treated equally. There have been demonstrated systematic and institutional practices, such as redlining, that have limited the access of women- and minority-owned businesses to the resources and opportunities afforded to others. We have designed our efforts to generate equitable results by leveling the playing field for those who have been underserved in the past. There is plenty of opportunity for all in our community, and we strive to ensure that women- and minority-owned businesses have access to those opportunities.

Thriving cities seem to have sporting events in their downtowns. Have we thought about relocating Bailey Park to the downtown area? Also, what's happening with old Kmart building?

Any plans to get entertainment at Kellogg Arena to draw people downtown?

-Sports tourism is a great asset in our community, and Bailey Park attracts many visitors we would like to have in the downtown. We do not currently have a site in the core downtown large enough to house the three stadiums, two quads, and practice field at Bailey. There are areas around downtown that might accommodate a relocation, but they would require quite a bit of redevelopment. Our focus is to continue programming at Bailey, while giving visitors a compelling reason to visit downtown while they are here. We believe we can accomplish this with the current downtown offerings, and the many exciting developments – like the Battle Rock climbing gym – that are in the works.

We have a vacant Kmart facility, and are looking at redevelopment opportunities. However, the city does not own the property right now, so we are considering the potential options. We hope it will become a mixed-use development area, in its great location near the river.

-We are considering how we think about Kellogg Arena, which already draws a significant number of visitors downtown with its event programming. It is a wonderful asset in our downtown that brings a lot of athletic tournament events, including wrestling, gymnastics, and dance competitions. The Calhoun County Visitors Bureau recently released a study about the impact of sports in the county, noting over 54 events held in 2018, bringing almost 100 million visitors to Calhoun County. The arena also hosts banquets, convention activities, and private corporate events.

As a downtown biz owner, one of the top complaints I hear is about parking – not how much, but the allocation, and the parking tickets. Can we clarify that, add better signage, and increase the two-hour limit?

We recognize that, as the downtown becomes more vibrant, parking is a critical issue we must address, ensuring that downtown employees and visitors alike have a place to park. It is a learning process and a challenge.

We have a pilot project coming, in which visitors can use a mobile app to extend their parking time. We are looking to try this on Michigan Avenue, at Riverwalk Centre, and in the State Street parking lot. Visitors would receive two hours free, and have the ability to pay for extended time.

We also are also working on improvements to our parking structures. We have plans for improvements to our existing structures, and to add another when we can afford it. Stay tuned for more information on all of these changes.